

Things Which Are Not

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Rounds



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Outside of a dog, a book is man's
best friend. Inside of a dog it's too
dark to read.

--Groucho Marx (1890 - 1977)

Forethought at Midnight

Business was slow last night.
Came home
From Bayers Lake on the Metro 52
(Which is that articulated bus that
Sways like a caterpillar if it were fat,
drunk
Or both)
And
I got home feeling awake and
uncertain
Of how you thought of me and
I guess it was good
That you were asleep
So I could think up some new ways
To say how much I love you
Only
Without the mock sincerity, or
That loathsome, grave earnestness
Before the morning came

It's All Over But the Shouting

I talk to old men who
Know a thing
About sustaining the
Cries of elephant bones
I send wine to them over
Baltic waters
I send flowers to their
Ugly daughters
It's what you do
When you want more heart
Beats
To seek the muse

By day
I sell broken
Televisions that can't
Compare
To electric caffeine
Preferred by crazy
Billions
Too busy passing their
Children through
Electrical fire
To see the earth crumble
Beneath them

I wonder which violin in
This bourgeois construct
Is real
And which one is a
Third-hand sample
Critics are too
Sidetracked to clarify
What is genuine and what
Is illusory

These things start to
Matter
When your son is
Searching for his Innocence
Tossed away in a field
Of filth



**Idling on empty in abject
darkness here on a bridge
made from broken hands
speared together with steel
wire....**

Tonight
We celebrate incredible
Savings
On the sins of your song
O Dirty sparrow
Because there were words of
Wisdom
That you spat between
Epithets
And I could hear them
Like angel wings
Aflutter
To which I was at first Impervious

But hours later

I played the sound of

Them
Back, like an old
Cassette tape
And I could feel the
Words also
And there was no denying
That some things sound
Better
When played back and
Meditated upon

And you have to just
Jump into deep blue sky
And even if you miss it
And kiss hard, cold
Ground
With the ugly kid next
Door

Well

That's the cost of
Admission
To a previously unknown
World

Steakhouse and Grill

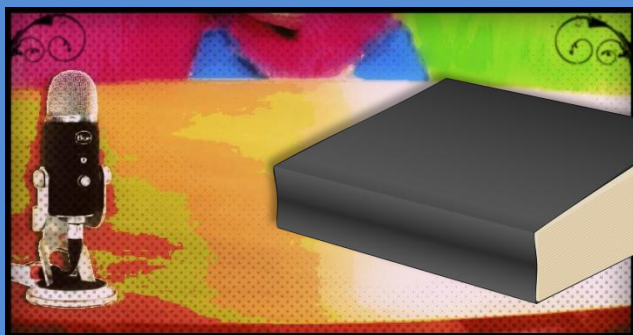
There
Under the cheap palm tree
Standing dead in the
Lobby
Facing Plexiglas®
Windows
And sliding doors
Which open automatically
If not consistently
Is a prototype of a radical outsider

Just in case our world
Needs a new cosmic kibitzer
Here comes the radical pilgrim
That little girl with the big, blue
eyes
Which weld tin hearts into knots
And boil lazy, wine-pickled brains
Into uninspired stews
It's a talent and defense and a calling
card

So kid, use your power well

And don't slice at first glance
Of a well-heeled man
He was far better than
His parboiled cousins
At least in brawn if not in brain
He was the only valet parking
Attendant
Who lifted automobiles into place
Rather than driving and parking
Them

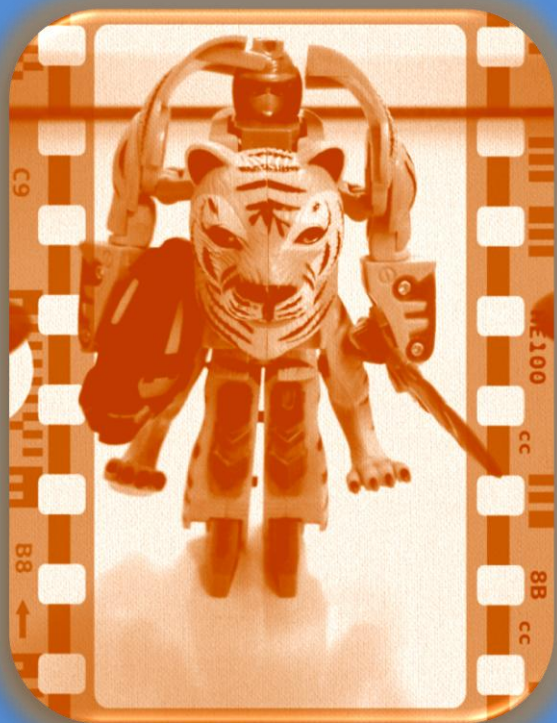
He sent a wonderful picture to the
object of his affections
So that, in his own words
She would have "something pretty
To frame and place on the wall
Over the toilet"



Daylight Saving Time (Mightily
Deviant Gas)

Before you nodded off
Last night
I meant to tell you something
But you fell asleep while I
Reminisced about that
Pink gorilla and his lime-green
Counterpart in a public access TV
Interview where they discussed the
Dangers of placing comforters in
15lb washers at the Laundromat
Particularly in the Family
Laundromat on Portland Street and
Then the green gorilla plugged his
Paperback novel about a tax
Adjuster with a cleft lip who lives in
A gypsy caravan on an abandoned
Stretch of Alaskan highway and the
Whole thing is based on a true
Story as told by a librarian from the
Public library on Gottingen Street
Who is known for her knowledge
Of medieval poetry and for a
Stuffed mackerel she carries
Everywhere and this mackerel has a

Shortwave radio stuffed inside and
You can tune it using its glass eyes
As knobs and at this point I forget
Why any of this was important but I
Wanted you to know that I love
You and that it's time to set the
Clocks ahead one hour



Perils in the City

Just a stone's throw from a marble
Quarry
The emperor moth has abdicated
Its throne
Spear thistle has gone threadbare
And homeless children make toy
Houses
From bundles of bills

Here:
Quark-sized
Baby-robot-turned-soliloquist
Devolves into lo-fi solipsism
By way of Kawasaki®, walkie-talkie
Oratory:

“The germinated exterminated
Itself today.
Too late for a drink and a sun tan!
Ultrasound reveals how unsound
We've all become.
Too late for the peasants to
Revolt—wait a moment—
This just in—oh, that's my thumb—
Nobles still insist that

The peasants are revolting.”

Here enter two figures:

Clyde the wandering, sleep eating

Fire-bellied Toad

With a rhinestone moustache

And a very nice suit

And to his immediate right

Enters the zoo-zonked, Bengal tiger

With transformative powers

(Examples: late model family van,

Discounted duvet cover,

Factory refurbished nose hair

Trimmer)

Shall they battle?

Shall they fight for the title of

Customer-Recommended

Employee of the Month?

Clyde and Thunder Tiger converse

At a picnic table

Against a cityscape reflecting into

The Halifax Harbour

Clyde wears a grey, double-

Breasted suit while his guest

Wears a fringed suede jacket cut in
the Western style

“Let’s return to the Puritans,”

Clyde offers

“Was outcast Anne Hutchinson a
Solifidian—your word--
Or just another radical feminist
With hyperthyroidism?”

Thunder Tiger leans in, clasps claws
And moves them

Like sidewinders traversing desert
Sand while speaking in a low
Voice offering cautious- albeit -
Convivial droppings of “aw shucks”
Proxy

But all this posing is interrupted by
An unplanned cough followed
By another

Thus prompting an unscheduled
Transformation into a nose
Trimmer which Clyde picks up and
Examines and then demonstrates
Until he sees the red blinking light
On camera one and then stares into

Its lens to say:
“Ladies and gentlemen, our tiger
Just made friends with whatever’s
Left
Of Bell and Howell.”

Clyde exits behind the wheel of a
'97 Ford Aerostar, smoke belching
Behind the closing credits
Dithyrambic jazz notes
Spilling over the air like silver
Spoons
From a thief's coat sleeve

And the television plugged into the
Sidewalk
Is alone in its cautionary leanings
And the children, critters and doll
Don't pay it any mind at all

Leather / Canvas / Plastic
(Song without Words)

They couldn't stand to represent
you
Not these
Pots and loss of money during the
Rinse cycle
But that kid in a Captain America
Mask
Appeared at the doorway at the
Pizza joint
With the Laundromat and the live
Performance stage show
All wrapped in a burial arc

And

Junior Captain America
Was wearing Aqua H2O
The two buck knockoff
Of Acqua di Gio™
This scent was not as musky as its
Inspiration
But more of a freesia -bulb -meets-
Kool-Aid™ scent

Here in this silent arcade
Where the bells of the pinball
Machine
And 8 bit bloops of star ships
Were smothered with the hand of
An invisible master
Cats ignored their herdsman
Knowing that disdain
Was the greatest weapon of all

Search No. I

Somewhere down the road
Past the kid with his father's two
Week's pay
Encapsulated in a glass and plastic
Rectangle
That he pokes with a thumb while
Staring

Is Carl "Coral" Friedman as a
Reminiscence

Telling me to place the hollow,
Plastic thumb
Over my natural one
And that the darker tint of the false
Thumb
Will match the lighter-tinted digit I
Was born with
Providing
"You perform this slight-of-hand
Under a forty watt bulb—but
Nothing brighter!"

All this with wide, eyes pouring
Sincerity

Into my thirsty eyes
Like wine into a parched mouth
Or sunshine on a forgotten plant

I do the disappearing handkerchief
Act
And amaze my friends

All one of them

And the mirror is happy to applaud
The plastic thumb falling to the
Floor
And the handkerchief with it
And the memory of Carl's eyes
Searching
Through the indifference of this
Future day
And wondering where I've gone

Nathaniel S. Rounds would be nothing
without his wife.

